

EU to limit vaccine validity in COVID pass to 9 months

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The European Union is poised to limit the validity of vaccine recognition in its EU COVID certificate to nine months, its executive said on Tuesday, in a bid to encourage boosters.

The European Commission said in a statement it has adopted "a binding acceptance period of nine months (precisely 270 days) of vaccination certificates for the purposes of intra-EU travel", to come into force from February 1.

The measure—which needs approval of EU member states to come into effect—comes as the bloc races to get booster jabs into arms under the shadow of the highly infectious Omicron variant.

Several EU countries had already announced go-it-alone measures that would soon consider double-jabbed people no longer "fully vaccinated" unless they also got a booster shot.

France, for instance, had said all adults whose second jab was more than seven months old would be booted from the national COVID pass—which is part of the EU COVID [certificate](#) system—from January 15 unless they could show a third vaccination.

Seven other EU countries—Portugal, Ireland, Cyprus, Latvia, Italy, Greece and Austria—have also brought in emergency measures requiring even vaccinated EU travellers to take pre-departure COVID tests or to quarantine on arrival.

The EU move seeks to harmonise acceptance of its COVID certificate across the bloc by making the validity of each jab nine months.

EU justice commissioner Didier Reynders said the European Union needed to "adjust to changing circumstances and new knowledge".

He warned that "unilateral measures in the member states would bring us back to the fragmentation and uncertainties" that, before the EU COVID certificate was introduced in July, saw testing and quarantine barriers spring up to travel in the EU.

"It's now up to the member states to ensure boosters will be rolled out swiftly to protect our health and ensure safe travelling," he said.

The EU COVID certificate has become a standard in the EU and dozens of non-EU countries for showing the bearer is immune to or free of COVID, notably by recording the vaccination status.

It is also used by many EU countries domestically as a pass for people to be allowed into venues such as restaurants and entertainment or sporting events.

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